

## Shinran's Concept of Voice and Word

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The Buddhist teaching is transmitted through voice as well as words. Fa-chao, in his *Wu-hui Fa-shin-tsan* (*Goe Hōjisan*), stresses that the Lotus and Vimalakirti Sūtras perform the Tathagata's work through voice and word, and that this is the essence of every teaching. The importance of voice and word in teaching is also emphasized in the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*, while K'uei-chi's *Ta-ch'eng Fa-yuan Yi-lin-ch'ang* (*Daijō Hōen Girinshō*), Fa-tsang's *Hua-yen-ching T'an-hsüan-chi* (*Kegongyō Tangeiki*), and other śāstras discuss their defiledness or purity and falseness or truth.

In this paper I will deal with Shinran's concept of voice and word. In my opinion, his position can best be discerned from two points of view. The first is that of the vocal analysis which he applied to sutra recitation, and the second is that of the literal analysis of terms which he applied to the exposition of the Buddhist teaching.

Regarding the first, vocal analysis, it is known that Shinran was keenly concerned about the correct implementation of the voice chart. In a noted passage he writes, "In the Bungo district, the voice (raised in recitation) is regarded as one of the offerings to the Buddha, especially to the Great Hachiman Bodhisattva." Since Amida Buddha is the primal ground of the Great Hachiman Bodhisattva, we can imagine how much

attention Shinran must have paid to the proper recitation of sutras. It is likely that he was versed in the *Yün-ching* (*Inkyō*), or “Mirror of Harmony,” which is the Chinese classic on intonation. The strictness with which he observed these rules of intonation is evident if we examine the “voice chart” of his *Kōsō Wasan*. At the same time, it should be noted that Shinran does not mention anything about the voicing of the nembutsu as the true cause for birth in the Pure Land—a view which is found in Kakunyo’s *Gaijashō*.

Regarding the second, literal analysis of terms, Shinran, in *Kyōgyōshinshō* (Chapter on Teaching) and *Jōdo Monruijushō*, follows T’an-luan in stating that “the purpose of the Larger Sutra lies in preaching the tathāgata’s Vow and its essence is the Name.” The out-going *ōsō ekō* issues from the Teaching, from which source emerge Practice, Faith, and Realization. Salvation lies ultimately in taking refuge in the Teaching as the command of both Amida and Śākyamuni. Thus, in the course of analysis of the Name, he writes, “Taking refuge is the supreme command summoned up by Amida’s Vow” (KGSS, Chapter on Practice).

In the Chapter on Faith, Shinran makes a precise analysis of Triple Faith as the content of having taken refuge by virtue of this supreme command. Here is evidence of his unexceptionally deep exploration for truth. We find how literally he accepted every word of the sūtras. Through literal analysis, he seeks to demonstrate how people in the age following the Buddha’s demise have come to take refuge in Amida as sambhogakāya in accordance with the teaching of Śākyamuni as nirmā-

ṇakāya.

Also, I touch upon Shinran's dream experiences, which is generally regarded as being unrelated with the problem of the Name. Opinion is divided on the question, however, and I intend to clarify the meaning of voice in terms of his dreams. My point is that the essence of his dreams is the revelation made by a Buddha or bodhisattva in manifested form.

I also deal with Shinran's views on the transmission of the Teaching in order to understand his concept of language. If we divide the corpus of his writings into commentaries, notes, and gathas, it becomes evident that his intention behind writing these works was solely for transmitting the Buddha's teaching. I try to clarify this intention by three categories which Shinran himself indicates—transmission (*tsutaeru*), composition (*tsukuru*), and composition and transmission (*tsukuritsutaeru*)—in annotation to his works.

Finally, I deal with the problem of Name-as-symbol (*myōgō honzon*), which is not to be understood as a mere object of worship. Shinran had a number of scrolls prepared with scriptural passages above and below the Name depicted. An examination of the content of these quotations reveal them to be clear expressions of the welling up of fulfilled faith, of the Vow-mind of nembutsu samadhi, and of the profound hearing of the voice of the Buddhas Amida and Śākyamuni directing us to take refuge.